

Key Findings: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States

In 1999, 87 percent of the adult population ages 25 to 64 in the United States had completed at least an upper secondary education—a higher percentage than in all other countries presented. While at least 75 percent of the adult population had completed at least an upper secondary education in Canada (79 percent), Japan (81 percent), and Germany (81 percent), the proportions were lower in the United Kingdom (62 percent), France (62 percent), and Italy (42 percent) (figure 2a).

In the United States, the proportion of younger adults (ages 25 to 34) that had completed at least an upper secondary education was about 7 percentage points higher than the proportion of older adults (ages 55 to 64). This relatively small difference (88 percent compared to 81 percent) reflects the fact that the United States has provided a relatively high level of access to upper secondary education for many years (figure 2a).

In contrast, several other countries presented have increased access to secondary education to a larger segment of their populations over the last few decades. This is evident in the larger differences in the proportion of older and younger adults who completed at least an upper secondary education in 1999—34 percentage points in France and Italy, 33 percentage points in Japan, and 25 percentage points in Canada (figure 2a).

As a result of increased access to secondary education in the other countries presented, the United States is in a different position on the proportion of young adults (ages 25 to 34) who completed at least an upper secondary education. For this age group, the 88 percent completion rate in the United States in 1999 was lower

than the rate in Japan (93 percent). However, the proportion of secondary school completers in the young adult population was still a little higher in the United States than in Canada (87 percent) and Germany (85 percent), and much higher than in France (76 percent), the United Kingdom (66 percent), and Italy (55 percent), despite broadened access to secondary education in these countries (figure 2a).

Comparisons of completion rates in higher education for the countries presented are very similar to completion rates in upper secondary education. In 1999, the United States had the highest proportion of adults ages 25 to 64 that had completed a first university degree (27 percent) among the countries presented. The completion rate in Canada (19 percent), with the second-highest completion rate of all countries presented, was 8 percentage points lower than the completion rate in the United States (figure 2b).

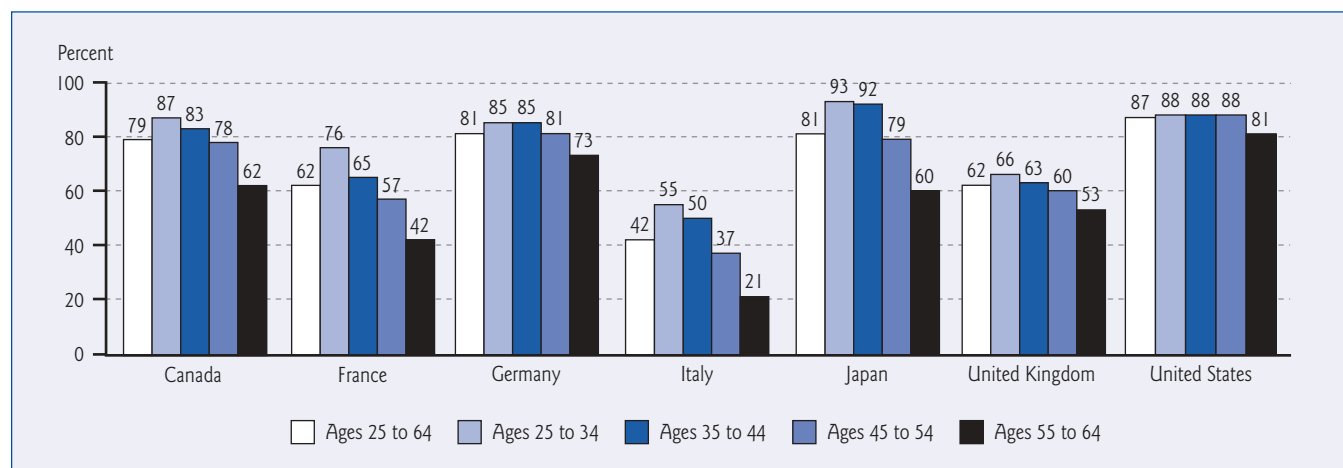
As with secondary education, most countries presented also increased access to higher education to a larger segment of their populations in recent years. Although the United States still had the highest proportion of adults ages 25 to 34 who had completed at least a first university degree in 1999 (29 percent), the gaps between the United States and Japan and between the United States and Canada was smaller for younger adults than for older adults. With Japan, the gap was 14 percentage points for adults ages 55 to 64 but only 6 percentage points for adults ages 25 to 34. Similarly, with Canada the gap was 9 percentage points for adults ages 55 to 64, but only 6 percentage points for adults ages 25 to 34 (figure 2b).

Definition and Methodology

This indicator shows the percent of the population ages 25 to 64 that completed a secondary education in 1999, and the percent of the population ages 25 to 64 that completed a degree in higher education. In the United States, the percentage of individuals who

completed a secondary education includes individuals who received a high school diploma and individuals who obtained a General Educational Development (GED) award.

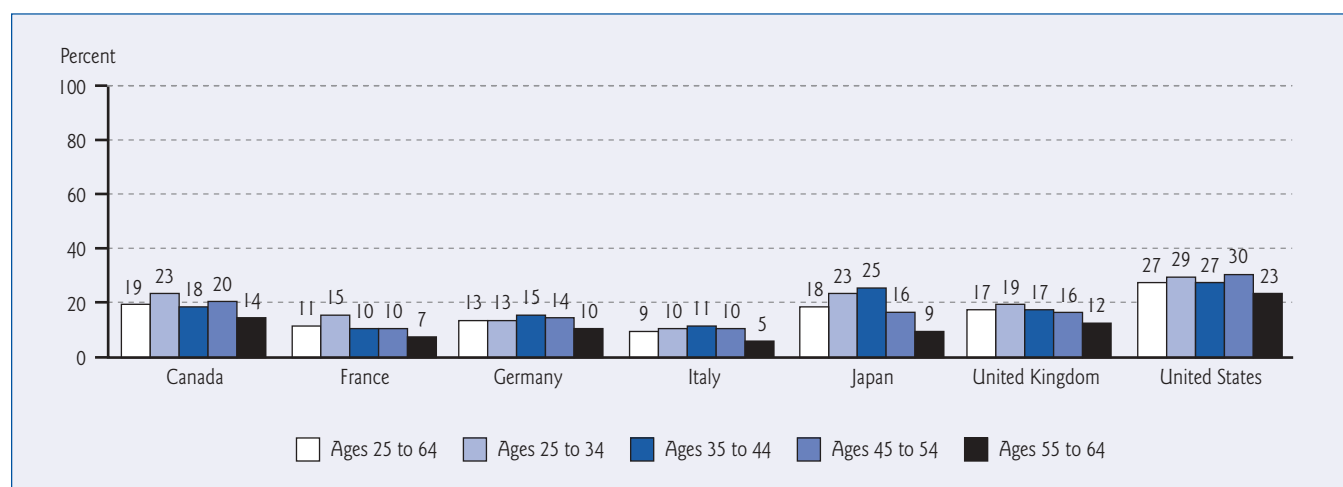
Figure 2a. Percentage population ages 25 to 64 that has completed at least an upper secondary education, by age group and country: 1999



NOTE: The United Kingdom includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Data for the United Kingdom exclude individuals who have completed short programs that do not provide access to higher education, since these programs do not meet the minimum requirements to qualify as upper secondary education based on the international standard (ISCED). Data for the United States include individuals who have completed both a high school diploma and a General Educational Development (GED) award.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance*, 2001, Table A 2.2a.

Figure 2b. Percentage of the population ages 25 to 64 that has completed at least a first university degree, by age group and country: 1999



NOTE: The United Kingdom includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Data for the United Kingdom exclude individuals who have completed short programs that do not provide access to higher education, since these programs do not meet the minimum requirements to qualify as upper secondary education based on the international standard (ISCED).

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance*, 2001, Table A 2.2b.

Educational Attainment – Data Tables

Table A-2a. Percentage of the population ages 25 to 64 that has completed at least an upper secondary education, by age group and country: 1999

Country	Age				
	25 to 64	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64
Canada	79	87	83	78	62
France	62	76	65	57	42
Germany	81	85	85	81	73
Italy	42	55	50	37	21
Japan	81	93	92	79	60
United Kingdom	62	66	63	60	53
United States	87	88	88	88	81

NOTE: The United Kingdom includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Data for the United Kingdom exclude individuals who have completed short programs that do not provide access to higher education, since these programs do not meet the minimum requirements to qualify as upper secondary education based on the international standard (ISCED). Data for the United States include individuals who have completed both a high school diploma and a General Educational Development (GED) award.

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance*, 2001, Table A2.2a.

Table A-2b. Percentage of the population ages 25 to 64 that has completed at least a first university degree, by age group and country: 1999

	Age group			
	25 to 64	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54
	19	23	18	20
	11	15	10	10
	13	13	15	14
	9	10	11	10
	18	23	25	16
	17	19	17	16
	27	29	27	30

NOTE: The United Kingdom includes England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Data for the United Kingdom exclude individuals who have completed short programs that do not provide access to higher education, since these programs do not meet the minimum requirements to qualify as upper secondary education based on the international standard (ISCED).

SOURCE: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Education at a Glance*, 2001, Table A2.2b.